



WELCOME TO GROW GROUPS AT PLATTE WOODS UMC!

You have made a courageous decision to dive deeper into your faith and GROW closer to God. These materials are designed to help guide you either for personal devotion or, ideally, in conversation with others. It is our hope that you can invite friends, family, or neighbors so that you can GROW together!

These materials were created to be adapted and shared. What does that mean? They should be used to fit your personal needs and the needs of the group. This isn't a task to be completed; rather, this is a guide to bring additional insight into your life. It's another voice to encourage you as you learn and grow as a follower of Jesus.

This journey, and these resources, are not meant to be kept private. In fact, we want you to share them with others! Matthew 5:16 tells us to "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." With you, we believe that sharing these resources will reach people we never dreamed of reaching. We hope that everyone would know the comfort of community and the fullness of God's love!

– The Pastors at Platte Woods UMC

TIPS FOR YOUR GROW GROUP

As a host, you want everyone to have the best possible experience in a Grow Group and we realize when people get together it can be a bit messy. Everyone has different experiences, backgrounds, and understandings of God and the world around us. Here are some helpful tips for your group!

1. **Check in with each other.** Make time each session to check in as a group. Lead this by sharing "highs" and "lows", using a scale of 1 to 10, or another fun method. It is suggested to do this before your group dives into the material.
2. **Pray for one another.** The group that prays together grows together! Prayer opens our hearts and expands our world. When we pray, we increase our compassion and empathy for one another; groups will have disagreements along the way and prayer helps us overcome those barriers.
3. **Be concise.** Healthy groups create space for one another. One of the best things you can do is listen. Make sure not to overshare which may cause others to feel they don't belong.
4. **Communicate regularly.** A simple message of, "I hope you have a great week!" goes a long way. Think about how your group would like to communicate. You can use a group text messaging app, email, or create a Facebook group. Regular communication has a big impact.
5. **Meet regularly.** Our recommendation is to meet weekly or bi-weekly. Don't worry if your group needs to take a break. Schedule it in and come back when the group is ready!
6. **Share your needs.** The pastors and staff at Platte Woods UMC are here to serve you. If there are questions that need further exploration or a major need comes up, we want to know about it!

Week 4 – Upside Down – Excluded

JOURNAL

OPENER

What was your favorite game to play as a child?

FOCUS TEXT – Luke 6:22, 26 (CEB)

²² Happy are you when people hate you, reject you, insult you, and condemn your name as evil because of the Human One. ²³ Rejoice when that happens! Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven. Their ancestors did the same things to the prophets.

²⁶ How terrible for you when all speak well of you. Their ancestors did the same things to the false prophets.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS

- Matthew 5:10-11

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Share a time that you have felt left out or excluded.
- How has your experience on the outside shaped your faith and the way that you treat others?
- What do you think Jesus is asking you to do in this text?

TAKEAWAY

Those who are on the outside have a deep need to know that they are loved and that they belong. When we find ourselves on the outside, God meets us and blesses us. When we step outside to include others, we find God’s favor. Where do you need to step out of your comfort zone and invite others in?

PRAYER

Includer of all, you see me when others don’t. You hear me when others don’t. You draw me in when others won’t. Reveal to me your true heart and, like a mirror, let me reflect your love to others. Give me your eyes and your ears to know the ones that I have overlooked. Teach me to reach ever further to your children. In your all-loving name, Amen.

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PRAYER REQUESTS

